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OPERATION JUMP START ENDS
Governor thanks Guard, Continues to Press D.C.

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano today extended her thanks to the men and women of the National Guard from around the country who voluntarily served at the border during Operation Jump Start. In spite of the Governor's continued objections, the draw-down supposed to be completed today.

"I can't say enough to thank these men and women of the National Guard for taking time from their families and their homes to serve on the Arizona border," said Governor Janet Napolitano. "The operation was very successful and their service was fundamental to that success."

Operation Jump Start (OJS) began in 2006 by order of the President. Governor Napolitano was instrumental in proving to the federal government that it could not only use National Guard members in a support role, but that it was appropriate for the feds to pay for that deployment, as well. Throughout OJS, Guard members have served in support roles, allowing U.S. Customs and Border Patrol to focus on its mission of primary law enforcement at the international border.

OJS is credited with greatly reducing the number of illegal immigrants apprehended crossing the southwest border, which reflects a decline in the number of illegal immigrants crossing. While on duty in Arizona, National Guard members from 51 of 54 states and territories helped the Border Patrol with Entry Identification Teams, built critical infrastructure and returned agents to the field by doing non-law enforcement duties. Some of the successes include building 34 miles of primary and secondary fencing, 66 miles of vehicle barriers, augmenting border-related intelligence analysis efforts, performing fleet maintenance, and operating detection systems.

Governor Napolitano remains opposed to termination of the border mission, and has repeatedly made that point to leaders in Washington, D.C., including Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. The mission of Operation Jump Start was to support the Border Patrol until the agency was adequately staffed, yet the staffing levels – to date – are still inadequate. In April, the Governor, along with Governors Schwarzenegger of California and Richardson of New Mexico, wrote to Congressional leaders outlining the need for the mission to continue.

“We finally got Washington’s attention, got them to take a hard look at an area they had sorely neglected, and finally put in place – through Jump Start – a program that works,” said the Governor. “But I don’t believe any Arizonan will tell you that our border problem has suddenly been solved. I intend, along with other border governors, to continue to pressure federal officials, and Congress, to come up with what we truly need: comprehensive reform of our nation’s immigration laws that includes technologically up-to-date enforcement, a realistic temporary worker program, a streamlined visa process and sensible way to deal with the millions of people who are already here.”

The Governor has issued a proclamation of thanks to all Guard members who participated in Jump Start over the past two years. A copy of the proclamation, as well as a letter of thanks to the nation’s Governors, is attached.

For more information about the Office of the Governor, please visit www.azgovernor.gov.